(b) whether it has been brought to the notice of SAIL that departmental enquiry has been conducted against the officials who were involved in this unfair practice with traders/firms; and

(c) what is the estimated loss incurred by SAIL during the last five years on this account in Bombay and Delhi and what action has been taken against the erring officials/traders?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF STEEL (SHRI SONTOSH MOHAN DEV): (a) No, Sir.

(b) and (c) Do not arise.

Iron Ore Export to Japan

8431. SHRI YERRA NARAYANASWAMY: Will the Minister of STEEL be pleased to state:

(a) whether any study has been done on the easy availability of iron ore to the domestic steel industry;

(b) if not, whether such a study will be commissioned;

(c) whether it is a fact that the best iron ore have been earmarked for export to Japan; and

(d) if so, the details on arrangements of iron ore supply to Indian steel industry?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF STEEL (SHRI SONTOSH MOHAN DEV) :(a) and (b) Yes, Sir. The Ministry of Steel had constituted a Task Force on Iron Ore in 1991 to inter-alia assess the likely demand and availability of iron ore in the country upto 2000 A.D.

(c) and (d) Under the long term agreement signed with the Japanese Steel Mills who are the major buyers of Indian Iron Ore, iron ore of different grades including high grade ore is exported to Japan from various sectors of the country. While committing annual quantities of iron ore under the said agreement, requirements of the Indian steel industry are kept in view.

Landed cost of imported steel

8432. SHRI YERRA NARAYANASWAMY:

SHRI V. RAJAN CHELLAPPA:

Will the Minister of STEEL be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the landed cost of some 8 types of highly consumed oriented steel items of imported steel is much cheaper than Indian steel;

(b) if so, what is Government's reaction thereto;

(c) whether lowering of rates of duty on these 8 items will have long term negative impact on Indian steel industry; and

(d) if so, the reaction of Government?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF STEEL (SHRI SONTOH MOHAN DEV): (a) to (d) The landed costs of almost all items of iron and steel including customs duty are today higher than the ex-stockyard prices of SAIL. However, with the reduction in customs duties on import of steel, the steel producers will have to improve their productivity and reduce costs to remain competitive.

Adverse Impact on VSP

8433. SHRI V. HANUMANTHA RAO: Will the Minister of STEEL be pleased to state:

(a) whether there is any adverse impact on Visakhapatnam Steel Plant due to international competition;

(b) whether Government noted the fact that huge amounts of public money are invested in Visakhapatnam Steel Plant;

(c) whether any assessment has been made of the long term impact by opening up the Indian market to foreign steel companies; and

(d) if so, the details of this assessment?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF STEEL (SHRI SONTOSH MOHAN DEV): (a) to (d) Visakhapatnam Steel Plant being equipped with the State-of-the-Art Technology is capable of producing steel at internationally competitive quality and prices and as such, has no problem in facing the international competition.

It is a fact that Visakhapatnam Steel Plant has been set up with a very heavy investment viz. the present cost estimates is Rs. 8529.13 crores. However, the performance of the plant has recorded a marginal cash profit of Rs. 55 crores (prov.) for the year 1994-95 and is expected to be a net profit earner by 1997-98.

Sick mini steel plants

8434. SHRI V. RAJAN CHELLAPPA: Will the Minister of STEEL be pleased to state:

(a) whether sick steel plants have been demanding transport subsidy;

(b) whether it is a fact that Government is considering revival of sick mini steel plants; and

(c) if so, the steps proposed to extend transport subsidy to mini steel plants?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF STEEL (SHRI SONTOSH MOHAN DEV): (a) No, Sir.

(b) and (c) While there is no proposal at present to extend transport subsidy to sick mini steel plants (Electric Arc Furnace Units), Government had, with a view to improve the performance of these units, reduced the import duty on steel melting scrap from 12.5 per cent to 5 per cent. State Governments have also been advised to consider supplying uninterrupted power to these units, at concessional rates.

In addition, Office of Development Commissioner of Iron & Steel has set up a "Core Group" to assist those of the units which are interested, in drawing up revival strategies.

Iron ore Supply to Indian Steel Industry

8435. SHRI V. RAJAN CHELLAPPA: Will the Minister of STEEL be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government will review iron ore supply to Indian steel industry;

(b) whether it is a fact that no study has been done of availability of iron ore over the next decade for Indian steel industry; and

(c) if so, the steps proposed to reserve good iron ore mines for Indian steel industry?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF STEEL (SHRI SONTOSH MOHAN DEV): (a) and (b) The Ministry of Steel had constituted a Task Force on iron ore in 1991 to inter-alia assess the likely demand and availability of iron ore in the country upto the year 2000 A.D.

(c) Exports of iron ore are made keeping the requirements of the Indian steel industry in view.